In Memoriam

The Holy Cow, Lakshmi

(Passed into the Light on 18th June, 1948 — at 11.30 A.M.)

By Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

Before the Golden Sage who reigneth still
At the wide foot of the celestial Hill
Arunachala — lord of the Beacon Light,
I bow in reverence, then rise to write
This song about the Cow who, ere she died,
Was by His touch of mercy deified
And set among the immortals who continue
To breathe as Light within me and within you.

Lord of sheer Grace! thy holy Name resounds
From end to end; thy Mercy knows no bounds,
Thy Power no limitation! Through thy Peace
The struggles of thy seekers slowly cease
Leaving a large contentment in the heart:
Before thy luminous Presence glooms depart,
Clouds vanish . . . In the stillness of thine eyes
The all-unseeing fool grows sudden wise,
The ignorant grow learned. With a smile
Thou canst redeem us in a fleeting while,
Rendering our lives significant. O thou
Who wearest realisation on thy brow
Even as a jewel! with what master-ease
Thou dost immortalise thy devotees!

And thou art worshipped everywhere by all
Who, touched by thy deep Grace, have heard thee call
And gathered at thy Feet: numerous shapes
Of peacocks, squirrels, deer, and dogs and apes,

Of cows and men. And from them thou dost draw
Thy chosen few according to a Law
Known but to thee, whom, drenching in thy love,
Thou dost, to each, allot a height above
Earth's little level, that they may arise
From hells of flesh to the soul's paradise.

It is of her I sing who is no more,
Lakshmi, the Master's sacred Cow, who bore
The beauty of a goddess — she who was
Experience carven out of luminous pause
And moulded into creature line and curve;
Lakshmi, the Mother Cow, was born to serve
Sage Ramana.

Yet, it was nothing strange,
Some say her creature form was but a change
From human, since — such is the story told —
She was a woman once, wizened and old,
Her wrinkled body all in tatters clad,
But held behind that ugliness she had
A lamplike soul that bade her self engage
In long and selfless service of the sage.

She came to Him through many noons and eves
Bringing Him simple fare of herbs and leaves
Plucked with devotion, cooked with love and care
And, it is said, He ate the humble fare
As though it were a banquet!

Serving thus
She died and passed into the luminous
Lakshmi that she might serve Him once again
And so, through service, finally attain
Self-knowledge and release. . . .

Great Master! thou
Art all-compassionate. Upon the brow
Of self-surrender thou dost seal thy grace
And dost, in a miraculous while, efface
Bondage and grief. In thy compassion's ken
Dumb creatures share an equal place with men.
Thy law is universal, working out
Even through layers and layers of lampless doubt
Ultimate faith which sees thee as thou art:
Master Illumination of the heart!

Even so did Lakshmi know thee, Master! when
She breathed and moved amidst a world of men
Who scarcely know thee. Even as a cloud
Moves in the wide horizon, glow-endowed
And solitarily she moved with grace
Within thy Love's horizonal embrace.

Within thy Mercy's garden, hour by hour,
She grew from bud to flower, and then from flower
Into the ripened fruit of wisdom hued
With subtle hues of inward solitude.
And while she was a bud she lit the air
With delicate sweetness making us aware
Of some high mission to be done through her;
Then, in the flowering state, she seemed to stir
The hermitage with more-than-human power,
And everywhere she went she was a flower
Scattering fragrance drawn from inwardness;
The Master met her soul, beyond our guess,
In high communion and absolute
Love that transformed the flower into the fruit
Of ultimate ripe attainment.

She has passed
Into His shining vast
Of Essence, beyond form and name;
She has become a Flame
Upon His quiet altar which shall burn
Forevermore, lending at every turn
Light to our hearts and splendour to our minds;
Dark Death, the wind of winds,
Can not disturb It on that altar burning:
She will no more in any form occur,
The law of evolution no more binds
Her great untramelled spirit. Lo, for her
There is no more returning!

Yet, let us see what was the heritage
Which brought Her to the all-compassionate Sage?
What strange unearthly scope
Embodied in her horoscope
And in herself? this creature made of earth,
What gave the high significance to her birth?
What penance and what prayer
In other births than this, her last,
Did she perform, scaling stair upon stair
Of pure illumination in the past
Closing in ultimate ripeness?

Let us unveil
Before the world her fascinating tale:
In nineteen twenty six, . . . four mortal years
After the passing of the Sage's Mother
Into the State of Light and Liberation,
Granted to Her by the great Seer of Seers,
A *bhakta* came to offer salutation
To Him, and brought with him a gift along,
A cow and a she-calf, lovely and strong

The rose-red season-ache in blood and limb,
With tenderness the creatures gazed on Him
And knew He was their Lord. . .

He only smiled
And gendy said: "The mother and her child
Need tending with devotion, love and care.
So, take them back, and know that I am there
Wherever they may be. . ."

Arunachala Pillai
"Lord, they are thine,
Have mercy and accept them. Every line
Contour and curve of them are thine alone.
It is a gift I make thee, humbly bowed
In reverence. I pray, do not disown
The humble gift. . ."

Out of the crowd
Emerged a little man, who hardly spoke
At other times, a puny fragile man
Whose words collected to a master-stroke
And seemed thrice pregnant with some future plan
Of which he was unconscious.

Ramanatha Dikshitar
It is my prayer
The offering be accepted. In this place
They shall remain receiving love and care
Fed not on fodder merely, but Thy Grace!

Thenceforth, the mother-cow remained beside
Her lovely calf which like a crescent waxed
In beauty day by day, and seemed untied
Knot after knot of creaturehood; relaxed

Slowly but surely from her animal state
The calf appeared to sense the Lord and wait
Tip-toe on some great happening, all sublime:
Then, they were led after a little time,
To dwell within a dairy in the town
Among a h u n d r e d others of their ilk,
Conducted by a person of renown
Who earned his daily bread by selling milk.
His name was Pasupati Aiyer. . . he
Was Ramana's thrice humble devotee
Who visited the Sage from day to day
And with him brought these twain to bend and pay
Homage along with him.

The calf began
Within herself to calculate and plan
Her future carefully, — yet, no one guessed
The gathering inspirations in her breast!
Without or show or fuss, she had decided
To learn by rote the roadways that divided
The dairy from the hermitage. And soon,
Growing from the young crescent to the moon,
She grew in wisdom and self-confidence
And with her growth, within her grew the sense
Of adoration for the Lord who was
Already bending her to other laws
Than those of earth and time. Each nerve in her
Began to wake and ache and thrill and stir
With sweetness, until every nerve became
A roadway kindled with unearthly flame
Leading her footsteps to the hermitage
Where on her own she came at last to dwell!
One of the few, the chosen of the Sage
Held evermore under His magic spell.

Lakshmi they called her; and, indeed, she proved
Goddess of Wealth. The way she breathed and moved,
The manner of her gait, the light that beamed
In her large jewel-glorious eyeballs seemed
To bear an air of boons.

After her coming
The little hermitage began a-humming
With affluence and progress. Thus, at length,
It grew from joy to joy, from strength to strength,
Lands multiplied, grew plenty, laughed with grain
And structures loomed like links within the chain
Of Ramana's growing Kingdom.

Her tangled mesh
Of mortal life is over. She is not
Among us now, a form of blood and flesh,
But lives as lyric light that never dies;
The memory of her movements brimmed with grace
Haunts us forever, and her jewel-eyes
Glitter in every corner of this place
Shedding strange glory. Everywhere we turn
We feel her presence like to moonrise burn
Cleaving our darkness.

While they build and raise
A monument to her in humble praise
Of her existence and her saintliness,
She stands amidst the toiling men to bless
Their labour. Her divine arithmetic
Sums u p the meaning of each stone and brick
Which go to build her pure mausoleum:
Her presence is not heralded by d r um
Or cymbal nor announced by sounding pipe,
But by Itself which sheds around a ripe

Self-blaze of realisation. She remains
As one ecstatic tingle in our veins
Linking us with the Master, golden-hearted,
Who but a little hour ere she departed,
Touched her into release, — calm stroke by stroke,
Thrice tenderly, compassionately, awoke
In her a wondrous seerhood!

She has gone
Beyond our common ken, beyond the dawn
And noon and evenfall — nay, she has earned
Creation's rich totality and turned
Part of creation's sweetness gripped above
Desire and hunger, thirst and ache and love
Which hold the world in bondage.

Seer of Seers!
Perfect us difficultly through the years
Into the state to which she has attained;
Make us, like her, surrender, every inch
Until we, too, have reached thy Feet and gained
Self-cancellation. May we never flinch
Even by a hair's-breadth from the Truth thou art:
Teach us, as thou didst her, in limb and heart
The full surrender until naught remains
Of blindness and corruption, rusted chains
Of thee-betrayal.

May we evermore
Learn from sweet Lakshmi to salute thy Light,
To bend in self-surrender and adore
Thy Presence reigning on the starry height
Piercing the darks of sightless human sight.
Give us the Grace, like her, to see
Beyond thy human form, thy Majesty

Enveloping the universe. Like her
Make each of us a true interpreter
Of spirit-radiance until we, who seek,
Grow one and indivisible with thy Peak.

COW LAKSHMI: EPITAPH BY SRI BHAGAVAN

On Friday, the 5th of *Ani,* **in the bright fortnight, in** *Sukla Paksham* **on** *Dvadasi* **in** *Visaka nakshatra* **in** *Sarvadhari* **year, that is on 18-6-48, the cow Lakshmi attained** *mukti.*